

New Adventures Among Old Books

AN ESSAY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
BIBLIOGRAPHY

William B. Todd

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Preface

In 1952 a new Chancellor and a new Director of Libraries at the University of Kansas, Franklin D. Murphy and Robert Vosper, came together to institute a revitalized program of enrichment and growth of the university libraries. One of the products of the program was the early establishment of a public lectureship on books and bibliography. In subsequent years five distinguished exponents of as many different kinds of bibliophily have visited the Lawrence campus to talk about books and bibliography. The choice of lecturers has been fortunate; all have had something to say. The present publication indicates clearly the further conviction that what the lecturers said was not only worth hearing in Kansas but is also worth reading and rereading anywhere.

The University of Kansas' Annual Public Lectures on Books and Bibliography are listed below. The purposes of the list are three: (1) To identify each of the five lectures presented up to 1958; (2) To delineate explicitly the peculiar facts of publication of the second, third, and fourth lectures within the Library Series of the University of Kansas Publications; and thereby (3) To allow colleagues in other institutions to escape some of the exasperation induced by publication of parts of one series within another series. A separate list of the entire Library Series is printed inside the front cover of the present volume.

ROBERT L. QUINSEY

THE ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURES ON BOOKS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIRST LECTURE

An Informal Talk by ELMER ADLER at the University of Kansas, April 17, 1953. Privately printed, 1953.

SECOND LECTURE

PETER MURRAY HILL. *Two Augustan Booksellers: John Dunton and Edmund Curll*. Delivered at the University of Kansas, October 6, 1954. University of Kansas Publications. Library Series Number Three. Lawrence, 1958.

THIRD LECTURE

WILLIAM B. TODD. *New Adventures Among Old Books: An Essay in Eighteenth Century Bibliography*. Delivered at the University of Kansas, December 9, 1955. University of Kansas Publications. Library Series Number Four. Lawrence, 1958.

FOURTH LECTURE

ARCHER TAYLOR. *Catalogues of Rare Books: A Chapter in Bibliographical History*. Delivered at the University of Kansas, November 30, 1956. University of Kansas Publications. Library Series Number Five. Lawrence, 1958.

FIFTH LECTURE

JACOB ZEITLIN. *What Kind of a Business Is This? Reminiscences of The Book Trade and Book Collectors*. Delivered at the University of Kansas, January 17, 1958. Publication to be announced at a later date.

New Adventures Among Old Books

AN ESSAY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is indeed an honor to present the third annual lecture sponsored by the University of Kansas on the subject of "Books and Bibliography." The privilege, as I am well aware, is attended by certain unusual responsibilities, since it brings me before an audience already familiar with the odd discourse of bibliographers, well-informed as to the purpose of bibliographical scholarship, and thus attentive to discussions far beyond the concern of more casual gatherings. While each succeeding speaker doubtless appreciates this happy circumstance, and the opportunity it affords for solemn and sweeping pronouncements, I am reminded of a particular event which this year constrains my remarks to books of the 18th century. The restriction is most welcome for it directs me to a period still of little interest to scholars, yet, as I hope to demonstrate, one of the most fascinating in the history of bibliography.

The event to which I refer is, as you know, the Mozart bicentenary now being commemorated at the University and in Kansas City. Such a memorable occasion can hardly go unnoticed, even by a lowly bibliographer, because it is quite apparent—as attested in the work of Ludwig Köchel, Alfred Einstein, and others—that of all composers Mozart has long been the most admired and the best served by those who practice our craft. What appeals especially to bibliographers, and others of an analytical bent, is a distinctive feature aptly expressed in Aldous Huxley's story *Young Archimedes*. The little

Archimedes of this tale, an Italian boy named Guido, soon exhibits a preference in music quite different from that displayed by his parent. In the father's opinion the only musicians of the first rank are Verdi, Puccini, Leoncavallo, and Rossini, all of whom move him to ecstatic "palpitation." Thus for the father the power to exalt and transport the listener constitutes the true measure of greatness in music. Likewise for DeQuincey and most literary critics (excepting, of course, the Aristotelians) this indefinable quality constitutes the only test of greatness in literature. But for the boy Guido—the incipient Archimedes—for all mathematicians, and for most bibliographers, the appeal of any work, musical, literary, or otherwise, is not so much in its variable effect as in the fixed "principles of the form"; and by this standard the amorphous creations of the Italian masters inevitably give way to the precise constructions of Bach, Beethoven and, supremely among them all, Mozart. Such music, as Guido says, is "easier" because it is methodical and subject to mathematical law. So too, as compared with the literary critic's ever-changing interpretation, the bibliographer's judgment is relatively easy and sure, deriving from the mechanical operation that produces the book and expressed in terms which, as McKerrow observed, may not be altered thereafter. Like Mozart's compositions, then, the bibliographer's labors, if done well, will endure, and for essentially the same reason.

What I have been attempting to describe, by way of this curious analogy, is the perfect bibliographer, one able to reconstruct for a book, as Mozart creates in a symphony, a methodical exposition readily discerned in

all its parts; but perfection, alas, nowhere exists and least of all among those dealing with 18th century books. When McKerrow speaks of the certain results accruing from bibliographical analysis he is addressing those concerned with earlier periods, where much is known, not those of the 18th century, who know very little. Before we may competently examine even one book we should know something of its printer, the ornaments and type in his shop, the procedures customarily followed in his day, the identity and location of other copies and other books by the same printer and, ideally, the whereabouts of other work by other printers of his time. All this in abundant measure is given, and is still being given to bibliographers in earlier and later periods, but continually denied to those who have chosen the 18th century. Thus deprived of essential guides to understanding we venture forth, a little uncertain of where we are going, where we have been, and what we have seen on the way. This condition undoubtedly produces an air of expectancy, a high sense of adventure; but as it can never foster sound scholarship I hesitate to recommend it as a sufficient reason for bibliographical research in 18th century literature. To the contrary I would advocate, as the sorry lesson of my own ventures, a certain direction and control over investigations in this period; and it will be one of my purposes here to suggest the various disciplines that may be applied.

The present uncertainty in the study of 18th century books is perhaps best exemplified in Lord Rothschild's magnificent collection, now recently described in the most scholarly, and certainly the most sumptuous cata-

logue ever published for this period. Here unquestionably is a collection of such an extent, and such excellence, as to demand, and to receive, the very best that bibliographical scholarship could provide. It is all the more remarkable, as the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* was quick to note, for encompassing in the most splendid manner, not a single author, nor a particular subject, nor some well-worked field in ancient or modern times, but the whole of a period now regarded as unfashionable.¹ This unfortunate attitude, one commonly held except for a short period in the 'twenties, has been a mixed blessing; for while it happily depressed the market at the very time Lord Rothschild acquired his collection, it also, most unhappily, denied him—and has denied his cataloguers—the expertise that usually accompanies only books in great demand. Enough was known of one prominent classic, *Tom Jones*, for Mr. Hayward to detect, early in the campaign, the imposition of a fraud. For some other works, particularly those by Richardson, Boswell, Gibbon, Mason, and Walpole, recent bibliographies provided reliable credentials. But for most of the rest nothing was available except chance citations in older and less reliable accounts. Consequently Lord Rothschild gathered together, along with his more splendid specimens, quite a few black sheep, all doubtless painted white when he got them, but many now betrayed in their true colors. At the sight of these the reviewer in the *Times* was again moved to comment; but his remarks here are somewhat beside the point, for he had recently been endowed with hindsight not given

¹ 18 March 1955, p. 172.

the collector. At the very time Lord Rothschild's catalogue was going through the press the status of his books was still being altered, in some cases for the worse. One of those so affected was Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, listed by the Grolier Club as one of the hundred most famous books in English literature, but apparently not significant enough to receive adequate bibliographical treatment until 1952. Another was Samuel Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*, a historic piece clearly reflecting the attitude that brought on our own revolution, and the work of an author most extensively studied over the last several decades, but one not properly identified until 1953. Still another was the duodecimo *Deserted Village*, highly commended in the 1947 exhibition of the National Book League as of "the very rare, privately printed 'trial issue,'" but then, in 1954, sadly acknowledged to be a common pirated reprint. So persuasive was the mistaken view of this book that Lord Rothschild was prevailed upon to accept no less than three copies, two of one piracy and one of another.² Yet as soon as the facts were made known, for this and any other work, the cataloguers were quick to present them, even if they diminished the importance of the edition described.

Nonetheless, though every effort was made to establish this, in 1954, as a standard catalogue for the 18th century, a permanent reference based upon the most extensive collection ever amassed by a private individual, the explorations now going on continue to undermine

² For the Burke, Goldsmith, and Johnson entries see *Rothschild Library*, nos. 522, 1033-5, and 1258-9. Since the cataloguers have questioned the evidence for 1258-9, and also for 1251, Johnson's *False Alarm*, it is to be hoped that someone other than the present writer will pursue the matter further.

its foundation. Of Goldsmith's *Essays* and Mason's *Musaeus*, both appropriately queried as firsts, the one is now confirmed as such, the other identified as a second.³ Of Sheridan's *The Critic*, again properly queried as "first edition, second issue," the correct designation, I believe, may be "sixth edition."⁴ Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, advisedly cited as of questionable status, has now been exactly defined.⁵ Two works by Chesterfield, one by Dodsley, and one by Home, all cited as first editions, may perhaps be disclosed as of a later issue or edition.⁶ Three periodicals, *The Tatler*, *The Examiner*, and *The World*, all described as "original issues," are now known to exist in two or more separate settings.⁷ On the other hand, Fielding's *Amelia*, described as of "two impressions" or editions, is now proved to be only of one.⁸ And so it goes, despite the compilers' strenuous endeavor to bring order out of confusion.

While the case for these several books appears at last to have been decided, one way or another, there are still loitering about in the catalogue a number of others seemingly above reproach but, I dare say, of very dubious character. Among these are Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, Goldsmith's *Good Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, Johnson's *Irene*, Mallet's *Elvira*, several of Pope's *Epistles*, Ritson's *Observations*, Shenstone's

³ For Goldsmith see Arthur Friedman's note in *Studies in Bibliography*, V (1953), 190-193; for Mason, *Papers of the Bib. Soc. of America*, XLVI (1952), 397-8.

⁴ *The Book Collector*, V (1956), 172-173.

⁵ By Franklin B. Newman in *Papers of the Bib. Soc. of America*, XLIV (1950), 340-371. See also *Studies in Bibliography*, IV (1952), 50-51.

⁶ *Papers of the Bib. Soc. of America*, XLIV (1950), 224-38; XLVI (1952), 45-57; XLV (1951), 72-6.

⁷ *The Library*, 5th ser., X (1955), 49-54, and references therein.

⁸ *Papers of the Bib. Soc. of America*, XLVII (1953), 70-75.

Poems, Somerville's *The Chace*, and Thomson's *Sophonisba*.⁹ All these represent a risky gamble in the present lottery of 18th century books. Even so, I hasten to add, for every "first edition" that may be deposed, now or later, there should be, if the law of averages applies, another first that holds its true position, or a "second" finally restored to its rightful eminence. It may be surmised, therefore, that if Lord Rothschild's collection has suffered from the general ignorance of 18th century books, it has also benefited from the same cause. Hence the compilers properly state that the collection includes not a late variant, as had once been supposed, but the true first edition of Hume's *Life*, the true first edition, first issue of Lewis's *The Monk*, and the true first edition, first state, of Pope's 1738, *Dialogue II*.¹⁰ These, at any rate, have been restored to a position previously denied them, and the compilers rightfully insist upon according them their correct status.

Lest it be assumed from all this that there is really no cause for alarm—that there are now a great number of 18th century bibliographers, all remarkably active in setting things right—let me observe that, with few exceptions, what we know of all the books just mentioned is represented in the casual essays of several persons not as yet engaged in the systematic study of any one author. These are accidental discoveries, some in the work of authors not closely examined in the last twenty years,

⁹ Notes on Pope, Akenside, and Ritson have since appeared in the *Book Collector*, V (1956) 48-52, 77-78; VI (1957), 408; and on Goldsmith in *Studies in Bibliography*, XI (1958), 133-142. Thomson, I understand, will also be considered in an article which Mr. D. F. Foxon is contributing to vol. XII of the *Studies*.

¹⁰ *Rothschild Library*, nos. 1179, 1327, 1643.

some of authors who have never been examined at all. Nevertheless, each accident underscores the need for deliberate research, a necessity which can be met not by the occasional studies of the few but by the concerted efforts of the many. Since the challenge has been met before, notably in earlier bibliographies by Chapman, Cross, Griffith, and Pottle, and in the later ones by Hazen, Sale, Gaskell, and Miss Norton, a similar response might be expected for the work ahead. Unfortunately, however, while there are any number of bibliographers competent for the task, practically all of them are busily engaged in some period other than the 18th century.

Now if it should be asked why so many elsewhere and so few here, I am bold to suggest that the vast weight and momentum of scholarship over the last century has sent bibliographers spinning off in two opposed directions, most often to the very earliest books, less often to those very recently produced; and no matter in which direction they fly, the 18th century is, for them, the barren waste between. Occasionally a bibliographer may be observed hastening from one camp to the other—Professor Bowers, for instance, from Shakespeare and Dekker to Walt Whitman, or Sir Geoffrey Keynes from Donne and Browne to Blake and Brooke—but these few rarely pause in no-man's land and the others never venture forth at all. Why is this? Is it that the need, so apparent in the 18th century, is so much greater elsewhere? Those in the camp of the moderns, I readily concede, attend to duties which, in recognition of our debt to the future, must be well performed. But those committed to

the most ancient books appear, from my limited perspective, to belabor issues which were decided, essentially, a hundred years ago. Where scores of others have gone before so go they, to trample over the same old ground. Here then and not in the 18th century, I would suggest, is the barren waste, an area fruitful indeed for the earliest arrivals, but stripped now of all that is of any importance.

The importance of a subject, however, is of no concern to the antiquarian bibliographer. It matters little to him that his text was hardly read in its own time and is of no possible consequence in ours. It matters even less that the book is of a character few can now decipher, in a language fewer still can read, and on a topic not a one may understand. For him it is enough that the book is an ancient artifact, something to be examined for its typographical peculiarities, and once these have been described he tacitly admits the present uselessness of this object, in a literary sense, by classing it not alphabetically by author, nor logically by subject, but chronologically by printer. Thus for him, as for all antiquarians, the older the object the more curious it becomes and the greater its fascination. No wonder then that archaeologists are now most excited by an unbroken hen's egg of the 4th century B.C., and bibliographers by an unimpaired missal of the 15th century A.D. As both the egg and the missal are, it is said, the earliest extant of their kind, both continue to receive attention out of all proportion to their present utility.

Most bibliographical research, I therefore conclude, is quite irrational, determined in part by the tradition of earlier studies, in part by an instinctive yearning toward

the antique, and not at all by any sense of the contemporary significance of the investigation. If it be granted that throughout the history of hand-printed books each succeeding period contributes more directly to our present culture, then the latest period, the 18th century, the time of our founding fathers, contributes most of all. This century produced books more widely read, in larger numbers, and of a greater typographical complexity than all earlier periods combined. Yet, so perverse is the trend of our scholarship, so persistent this urge to explore the dim recesses of the distant past, that the more recent the book, and the more evident the need for further knowledge of its identity, the number of its editions, the extent of its revision, the less information is provided. For 15th century English books there are at least six standard references, all under continuous revision and reclassification, for the 16th century three or four comprehensive accounts, for the 17th century two or three, for the 18th not a one. Such is the lamentable state of affairs, sorry enough, I think, to justify my protest.

So far I have endeavored to show the urgent necessity for research in the 18th century and to account for the various reasons why this need has not as yet been met. It now remains for me to propose several projects where research may produce useful results and to describe, so far as they may now be recognized, a few of the snares that await the unwary in these ventures.

The first and greatest task ahead is the compilation of an adequate Short Title Catalogue identifying and locating English books printed in the 18th century. For such a vast undertaking as this it would be idle to specu-

late now on all the contingencies that may arise before and after work proceeds. If Mr. Wing encountered many hazards in the listing of books for the preceding century, we may certainly expect many more in a time of enormously expanded production. We must also consider that increased production has brought about refinements in technique and standardization of material, both of which tend to eliminate the usual points that distinguish one edition from another. Added to this are various deceptions which, whether innocently or deliberately contrived, have been all too successful in concealing editions of certain 18th century authors. Not until recently has the lost second edition of Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny* been found hiding under the title of the first. Similarly for the second edition of Whitehead's *Variety*, the second of Mason's *Musaeus*, the second, third, and fourth of Goldsmith's *Good Natur'd Man*, and the seventh and eighth of his *Traveller*. These and other considerations therefore pose certain difficulties which can be overcome, I think, only by methods differing from those followed hitherto. For investigation of this extent, this complexity, it is essential that there be, first of all, some assurance against failure (a failure already witnessed in one abortive attempt); and that assurance is best secured in a systematic program confined to certain defined limits, yet always open to any number of researchers, and readily adaptable, if need be, to the publication of research at any stage of the work. Mr. Wing's solitary labors, all completed through Z before the issue of anything on A, offer a precedent much to be admired, but much too hazardous for exploring the vast uncharted area of the 18th century.

At the outset, then, if I were ever encouraged to begin this task, and were foolhardy enough to accept, I should start by compiling a chronological record of all that deserved any notice at the time of publication. This record would be taken, month by month, from advertisements in several of the daily papers, the register in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and if necessary from the reviews in the journals. Such a record, as I have indicated elsewhere,¹¹ would provide a wealth of information never to be gained from the books themselves—the approximate or exact date of publication, the price, the original binding, special issues, unrecognized attributions, the names of publishers other than those identified in the imprint and, of the greatest importance, the identity of books suppressed immediately before or after publication, or books subsequently lost from view. In one stroke this record will give us all the preliminary data we need of books having any significance whatever, permit us to cite a great number which might otherwise now escape detection, and at the same time restrain us from pursuing to utter distraction the multitude of printed scraps beneath contemporary notice—the handbills, penny ballads, posters, circulars, labels, and what not. It would also establish, more accurately than any committee of experts could do it today, what was being read at the time, and thus, in some measure, allow contemporaries of the 18th century to sit in judgment upon themselves and share in the preparation of their own record. Moreover, as this record would accumulate chronologically, it could itself be published at any time and serve very effectively as a

¹¹ *The Library*, 5th ser., VIII (1953), 174-87.

provisional STC, or "Term Catalogue," until such time as the second phase of investigation could be completed.

The second phase would confirm and locate the books noticed in the first, proceeding now with the data cards sorted in alphabetical order by author or by the first significant word of anonymous works. (The process of resorting could be easily accomplished if, in the first place, the entries were made on IBM cards, which could then again be used, much later, to provide still another index of publishers.) Besides confirming the entries, a check of the libraries would disclose prospectuses, subsequent editions, and provincial issues, most of which are not reported in the papers, and thus extend the record, though still confined to significant work, to all the later variants. Again, it will be noted, the research is so arranged that at any time the results may be published, first for A, then for B, and so on. Finally, since it is always the responsibility of the compiler to examine at least one copy of every book cited, I would suggest, as an aid to further research, the notation for every book of a single point; and since variant impressions or settings are more likely to occur in the earlier gatherings, the most useful reference would be the first press figure in the text proper or, if figures are not used, the position of the initial signature. It is much better, I think, to locate and supply a specific point for every book than to attempt a general census of all known copies, for that would depend too much upon the reports of others and might invite false assumptions. Then if the point leads to the discovery of variants the catalogue has immediately performed a valuable service, albeit not the one for which it was originally intended.

So much, in a most general way, for my proposal. I offer it not in the hope of its being accepted but with the earnest desire that it provoke some discussion, and not a few trials, whence only can come the most feasible procedure. To be undertaken the program needs at the beginning at least one dedicated and persevering fool, as Mr. Wing so aptly describes him, and, while it is under-way, many other persevering fools. It requires also, as only great understanding and sufficient resources can provide, an adequate grant to encourage and maintain the research. What is now being asked for a single leaf of the *Constance Missal*, I have little doubt, would insure the completion of work on no less than 10,000 books in the 18th century. But perhaps I exaggerate the importance of this task; perhaps 10,000 English volumes in the time of Pope, Johnson, and Burke, or of Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, are not worth a single Latin scrap in the time of Frederick III.

Aside from newspaper advertisements there are available other and more immediate references to 18th century books which, though less extensive and thus less useful in the preparation of an STC, have much to contribute to scholarship in this period. One valuable document, now deposited at the Bodleian, is William Bowyer's Paper Stock Ledger, an account kept by the warehouseman of the paper allotted for Bowyer's printing jobs. Altogether from 1717 to 1765, the period of greatest activity, 1806 books are identified, and some record given of the number printed, the total issued in various formats and states of cancellation, and, as occasion might require, the remainders eventually distributed or abandoned.

Though much of the record is, as Professor Davis has remarked, annoyingly inaccurate and incomplete,¹² it still presents many insights into the printing practices of the day and the many problems which that day has passed on to us. Some of these are dealt with in Professor Davis's article, others in Mr. Maslen's unpublished thesis.¹³ Of all that they report the most distressing problem, and one bound to affect later studies, is that of finding the books described in the record. After searching through the thirteen principal libraries in and near London, Mr. Maslen acknowledged that of the 1806 books listed he was unable to locate 279, well over 15 percent of the whole; and among these were such popular works as the *Poor Robin Almanack* for 1740, of which 11,000 copies were printed, and Tipper's *Ladies Diary* for 1760, printed in no less than 15,000 copies. From this it is quite evident that if we are not soon provided with an STC, as a guide to books known and a reminder of those unknown, scholars will find it ever more difficult to recover the original work of any one printer or, indeed, of any one author. Again, therefore, I plead with the antiquarians to leave off the numbering of older books, already counted some ten times over, and attend to more pressing needs. Let us away from what is now safely preserved, under many locks and keys, and rescue what is now being ravaged by the worm, the flood, and the pulping mill.¹⁴

¹² *The Library*, 5th ser., VI (1951), 73-87.

¹³ A copy of Keith I. D. Maslen's dissertation is filed at the Bodleian Library.

¹⁴ As Douglas Grant remarks in *The Book Collector* [IV (1955)], even the poems of Charles Churchill are now rarely to be found "but many booksellers, grudging them space, have shipped them off to be put in an expedient candidly admitted by a leading London bookseller." "Space is the only consideration, for 18th-century work, it may be put that the more voluminous an author the less his chance of survival."

More important than the Bowyer account or any other of the 18th century is William Strahan's Register of Printing. Between the establishment of his business in 1738 and his death in 1785 Strahan printed about 6,000 books, most of which are recorded with the greatest precision in a series of ledgers recently deposited at the British Museum. Apart from a considerable number of ancient texts and numerous reprints of 16th and 17th century classics, the stock in trade of any house, Strahan printed most of the contemporary work still remembered today, including the sermons of Whitefield and the Wesleys, the histories of Gibbon and Robertson, much of the verse of Armstrong, Falconer, Home, Macpherson, Pope, Ramsey, Smart, Thomson, and the prose of Fielding, Johnson, Hume, and Smollett. His record thus reflects, better than any other, the literary fashions of his day, fashions which, I suspect, may have been somewhat misjudged by the literary arbiter of the age. Notwithstanding Samuel Johnson's pronouncements, most of his contemporaries seem to have had quite different tastes, preferring in the drama, Otway's *Orphan* (9,000 copies in three editions), in the novel, Fielding's *Tom Jones* (10,000 copies in four editions), in poetry, Thomson's *Seasons* (13,250 copies in seven editions). Less significant, but no less exciting, apparently, were other things, among them an unidentified letter to one Mr. Watts (10,000 copies in one edition), something called *Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box* (14,000 in one edition), and John Wesley's little tract *Swear Not at All* (21,000 in

the natural enemies of books continually attacking the smaller works and the supposed friends as determinedly junking the larger, time is indeed running out for the bibliographer.

seven editions). If these figures, all taken from a relatively early period (1749 to 1762), excite any wonder as to the capacity of the press, let me cap them off with the most extensive run I have yet encountered. This, in 1755, is the Proposal for the *New Universal Dictionary*, an announcement printed in three editions totaling 134,000 copies, enough possibly for every literate person in the kingdom.

Needless to say, all ephemera of the kind just mentioned have sunk into oblivion and are now, perhaps, beyond recovery. Even so, if there were some means of discovering the loss, either through the Strahan ledger or through an STC of known or unknown work, there might still be time to retrieve those which still deserve to be remembered. Consider, for example, the fate of the Wesleys. John and Charles were certainly two of the most influential figures of their time, both in England and in America; yet their bibliography, though a most exacting piece of research, records no separate printing of *Swear Not at All* (though of various issues it ran, as I have noted, to 21,000 copies), no Strahan editions of 15 other works which he lists as printed, no editions whatever of 14 other books exclusively entrusted to Strahan, none of 3 others which, it would appear, the Wesleys edited, and none at all by Mrs. Wesley, though she apparently wrote at least one pamphlet. Moreover, as the ledger indicates, the bibliography has incorrectly dated John Wesley's *Hymns for Times of Trouble*, and has arranged in the wrong order the editions of his *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*. So it goes, not only for the Wesleys but, I fear, for many other authors less

carefully considered. In Strahan's register, however, is the solution for many difficulties, and some way should be found to get it published.

I trust that I have, by now, convinced even the most sceptical of the evident need for research in the more general areas of 18th century bibliography, particularly in the compilation of an STC and in editions of the Bowyer and Strahan ledgers. If this much is evident it will be even more apparent, as our experience with the Wesleys has just shown, that in the light of information now available to us we also need to revise specific author bibliographies. As in other scientific investigations, the passing years have witnessed, especially in the analysis of 18th century work, the development of new techniques permitting a more precise description of books and thus a more accurate identification of their variants. No longer can we accept generalized accounts based upon the one or two specimens immediately at hand for, taken in isolation, these may be representative neither of the species being described nor of the order of variants before and after their time. Hence for the collector or librarian striving for completeness, for the bibliographer endeavoring to explain the method of printing, or for the editor attempting to trace the development of the text, the older studies may now have little to offer. Granted, for every one of them, pioneering work in a field little understood, the fact remains that, as with Darwin's theory of evolution or Edison's incandescent lamp, time has wrought new interpretations and devices.

With all due deference then to what has already been accomplished, I would suggest that bibliographies as anti-

quoted as Edison's lamp may, like his experiments, profit from a later review. Too much of what we know rests entirely on conclusions first advanced in the 'twenties and never questioned thereafter. Yet it is conceded that these bibliographies suffer from deficiencies that render every conclusion suspect. One common fault is the failure to record press figures, a kind of evidence which, though summarily dismissed by McKerrow, is now generally regarded, in 18th century books, as the most valuable clue for distinguishing variant editions and impressions. It has been said that, in demonstrating the various uses of press figures, I have "exaggerated the revolutionary effects which this new method . . . may have upon the analytical bibliography of all eighteenth-century authors,"¹⁵ and it is certainly true that my enthusiasm has carried me beyond what the conservative view maintains; but whatever the presumed effects, a matter for the future to determine, the demonstration of present worth is incontestable. The significance of these figures has led Professor Bowers, for one, to insist that they be "minutely recorded in a shorthand manner for every forme and sheet of a book in an eighteenth-century bibliography which has any pretensions towards being definitive."¹⁶ Equally insistent is the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, who roundly declares that "in no future full-dress bibliography . . . will it be excusable to omit recording press-figures."¹⁷ Not only for the future, I would add, but also for the past, the omission of these figures in the description invalidates every bibliography

¹⁵ *Year's Work in English Studies* for 1950, p. 273.

¹⁶ *Principles of Bibliographical Description*, p. 321.

¹⁷ 23 March 1951, p. 188.

of books in which they are represented. Until this evidence is recorded we will continue to describe as of two impressions (e.g., Fielding's *Amelia*) a book existing only in one, and to identify as of one impression or edition (e.g., works by Pope, Chesterfield, Goldsmith, and Johnson) books actually appearing in two or three.

The second deficiency in many 18th century bibliographies results from the failure to examine all contemporary notices of the book described, not only those in the newspapers but—as I would now add—those in the Bowyer and Strahan ledgers. It is unnecessary to rehearse earlier arguments on this evidence since, in so far as they relate to advertisements, the reviewer for the *Literary Supplement* has again declared that “there are few existing bibliographies . . . which could not receive beneficial revision from the application of [these] methods.”¹⁸ So long as the contemporary record is ignored bibliographers will continue to overlook work attributed to their authors (e.g., the Wesleys), to describe as of the second edition (e.g., Bramston's *Man of Taste* and Hume's *Life*) books representing the first, and to identify as of the first issue, first edition (e.g., Lewis's *The Monk*) a book actually of the second state, third issue, of the third edition.

Unlike the others, the third deficiency has not as yet been sufficiently realized, though it possibly accounts for as many errors and omissions as the other two combined. This results from the common practice of recording only first editions or, as they are more properly called in the 18th century, the initial impression of the

¹⁸ 11 June 1954, p. 384.

first edition. Though later printings are often labeled as later "editions" on their titles (or half-titles), the great majority of these, in the 18th century, are actually new impressions from the same type, each of which may introduce some variation in the text. Corrections at press, occurring, in earlier times, only in the course of printing the one and only impression, are here undertaken, normally, only between printings, and often extend through a series of impressions produced at a date considerably later than that of the original issue. It may be, then, that the final state of the first edition is not attained, say, until its 13th impression, a variant issued perhaps ten years later and arbitrarily designated as the "Tenth Edition." Whatever the printer chooses to call it, the bibliographer should classify this and all other impressions as part of a continuing (or recurring) job at press, part of a single edition. This notion, I realize, may seem a little startling, but it in no way violates the concept of an edition as defined by McKerrow or Professor Bowers. It merely extends the definition, logically, to situations not within their immediate purview. By this logical classification, and only by this means, may the bibliographer identify and order the variants within an edition, detect stray sheets from other impressions, and thus, finally, account for the progressive development of the text.

Let us now observe how this reasoning might affect the classification of four well-known plays. Though the four are variously described as of from one to six editions, according to what the printer calls them, typographically all are alike, all approximately of the same number of impressions, and each of a sequence comprising

only one edition. Taking these plays in chronological order, we begin with Thomson's *Sophonisba*, a work once thought to be of four editions (as reported from Bowyer's accounts), though now tentatively considered to be of several indefinite issues. Those who rely upon titles have to date made little headway with this play since the printer, in this one case, neglected to distinguish his variants. The press figures, however, disclose five impressions, one in 4° format and four in 8°, each presenting some improvement of the letter from which all successively derive.

The second play, Goldsmith's *Good Natur'd Man*, is also rather indefinitely defined, for while the printer now labels some of his variants as "editions," his order is apparently inconsistent and incomplete. But again, if we disregard the titles and examine the press figures, we will see that there are actually five distinct impressions of this play, the first two unlabeled, the next two called a "New Edition," and the last called a "Fifth Edition." The printer's final count, we will observe, is quite right, even if his terminology is wrong. In the first two impressions, it may also be observed, there is some underprinting, resulting in certain differences much confused by the bibliographers; and in the previously undifferentiated third and fourth impressions there is some correction at press, a circumstance completely unknown to Goldsmith's editors.

The order of the third play, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, appears to be much less confused, since the printer has now obligingly labeled his so-called editions progressively through the "Fifth." But again appearances

are deceiving, for there are two "First" and two "Fifth Editions," or six impressions altogether.^{18a} Once more the press figures provide a reliable guide, establish the correct order of the impressions (including several states within them), and confirm the existence of only one true edition.

The last play, Sheridan's *The Critic*, is to bibliographers the most vexing of all, because the printer here labels his "editions" only on the half-title, a preliminary leaf often removed by unaccommodating binders. Deprived of this vital evidence, the bibliographer has, he frankly admits, no way of distinguishing a "First" from a "Sixth Edition," no assurance for the anxious collector, no warrant for the inquiring librarian. Here, I must confess, the figures also provide no certain clue, at least for the first two impressions, but thereafter they differentiate all the variants. Through this evidence one prominent copy, now described in the bibliography as a variant of the first edition, assumes its rightful place as a specimen of the last, or sixth impression.

The four examples just cited show how simple it is to order the variants now so much confused, once they are considered in the larger context of the term "edition," and how readily previously undifferentiated impressions are detected and assigned their proper place. Granted, then, that an "edition" should comprise all the impressions of a single setting, whatever their number and however distant in time, we may proceed now to examine a book infinitely more complex in structure. This is Burke's *Reflections*, a book of many variants, the

^{18a} Not a total of seven, for the "Second" and "Third" appear to be of a common impression. *Studies in Bibliography*, XI (1958), 133-142.

earliest of which I ventured to identify and describe several years ago. Since that earlier endeavor was not too well received, being regarded in one quarter as somewhat "provocative"¹⁹ and, in another, as a "bewildering, but textually unimportant problem of classification,"²⁰ I feel obliged to re-examine my position and, in accordance with the recommendations I have just made, to extend my inquiry to all later impressions of the 1790-91 text. A rejoinder has been this long delayed because it has taken me these last four years to locate a copy of the variant called the "Seventh Edition"; but now that this unique copy is safely in my custody,^{20a} and properly established as the most significant of all the impressions, I venture forth again, this time, I trust, in a less provocative and more convincing manner.

Though I have now had an opportunity to examine all fourteen impressions, as compared with the six previously described, my earlier decision that there are essentially only three editions remains unchanged. The first of these, I again assert, consists of a single impression, the type for which, through the greater part of the book, was distributed as fast as it was used. Evidently, then, the printer at first regarded the book as a single enterprise, not to be continued through several impressions; and while he subsequently decided to hold the type for an increased issue, this belated move does not alter the fact that the initial impression is substantially the only one of this setting, and distinct from any other. For the

¹⁹ *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 March 1952, p. 180.

²⁰ *Rothschild Library*, no. 522.

^{20a} Four copies have now (1958) been found and deposited, one at the Bodleian, one at the British Museum, and two in my collection. Of this, the last revised impression, a reprint is shortly to appear in the "Rinehart Editions" series.

next four impressions, however, the printer at the very outset retained all of his type (excepting a few pages here and there which were accidentally pied), a clear indication that he had by now determined, on the basis of its rapid sale, to keep the book at press as long as the demand continued. These four impressions, only two of which the printer calls the "Second Edition," therefore all comprise the second edition, a sequence essentially from the same setting and, again, distinct from any other.

Had the printer been left to his own devices he doubtless would have continued reimpressing indefinitely; but after the fourth in the second edition sequence he was given a number of revisions which necessitated the dismantling of practically every forme, the reimposition of half the type, and an enlargement of the text from 356 to 364 pages. Out of all this evolved what is properly called (in its first impression) the "Third Edition," one essentially of the same type but of a different setting. This and all later "editions" through the one called the "Eleventh" constitute, as I am now prepared to state, nine distinct impressions of this third edition. In the previous two editions printing accidents result in about 100 minor variants, all of course without authority; and to these are added, in the earlier impressions of the third edition, almost 200 others, many of these at the direction of the author, and most of the greatest significance. Altogether, then, the last revised impression—the fifth of this sequence, or the one the printer calls the "Seventh Edition"—represents an accumulation of approximately 300 variants, some with authority, some without. Thus by a systematic examination of this book,

its type, its figures, and its text, I have identified five indiscriminated impressions, ordered these and nine others in several editions, recorded the first appearance of several hundred alterations in the text, and established according to the time of their appearance the degree of their validity. Admittedly to some this may still be a little "bewildering" and quite "unimportant;" but to me it is yet another sign, plain and arresting, of what needs to be done in the 18th century. If this has never been attempted for one of the hundred most significant books in our language, how are we to regard the textual authority of thousands of others of lesser consequence?

So far I have commented on seven different editions of various works, each ranging only from one to nine impressions, and each of a setting held intact for no more than a year. As we previously agreed, however, an edition is limited neither in the number of its impressions nor in the time of their issue, so long as all derive essentially from the same setting. With this in mind let us now consider two other examples, the most extreme of any known to me in the 18th century. One is Thomas Erskine's *View of the Present War with France*, a pamphlet first issued at 8 A.M. on 11 February 1797, and reissued so often thereafter that, by the end of the year, it seems to have progressed through 35 impressions (or, as they are called on their titles, 35 "editions"). This is indeed, if true, a remarkable performance, averaging a new issue every week; and like the performance witnessed in Burke's *Reflections* it is attended with certain irregularities, among them some resetting in impressions 2, 6, 9 and some revision in impressions 7 and 12. In contrast

to these alterations, however, there are occasionally for two or three consecutive "editions" no differences at all, in press figures or in any other respect, except for the change in the edition number on the title. It may be then that the author and printer, eager to promote the sale and propagate Erskine's thesis, connived to "give an impression" where one, in fact, does not exist. This proliferation of variants, real or suspect, was noticed, I may say, by Erskine's adversary, John Gifford, who testily remarked that he was unable to catch up with this pamphlet until it had passed through the "Ninth Edition." Gifford's suspicions as to the reality of these editions also hold for his own rejoinder, one which reached the "Eighth Edition" before I caught up with *it* and eventually, in the same year, went through eleven. Nonetheless, though the actual count for either cannot be precisely determined, all the variants of Erskine's essay, at any rate, fall within our definition of a single edition.²¹

The other and even more remarkable example is Sheridan's *Pizarro*, a play little regarded today but apparently his most popular work at the time. First published in 1799, it passed its "Thirtieth Edition" in 1814, and for all I know may yet be running off the press. Moreover, some (and perhaps all) of these thirty impressions exist in two issues, one on common, the other on "fine wove hot-pressed" paper, both of which occasionally

²¹ Though I left the question undecided at the time of reading this paper, I am now of the opinion that, lacking something more tangible than Gifford's insinuations, all the Erskine "editions" (and all of Gifford's, for that matter) should be regarded as separate runs at press, or separate impressions. Even where the press figures remain the same it may be shown, in another work, that the sheets have been several times reimpressed; and if this is demonstrable in one, it may be assumed in all. On this and other examples of what may be called "recurrent printing" see *Studies in Bibliography*, XII (1959), 189-198.

reflect some difference in presswork. As with the Erskine, however, some other impressions continue without alteration (except for that on the title); but unlike the Erskine there is no resetting, even of a single forme, until after the twenty-fifth impression, when a few signatures are several times recast. It may be noted also that, while there is some typographical improvement in the 2d, the author himself revised the text only in the 12th and 24th impressions.

With Sheridan's play, published at the very end of the century, I may properly conclude this chronological review of multiple impressions, a review that has ranged from one work impressed four times in two weeks to others impressed thirty-five times in one year or thirty times in sixteen years, and from one completely unrevised to others revised on three or four different occasions. As these differences are obviously only of degree, and not of kind, the term "edition" if it applies to one applies to all. With this much acknowledged, it follows that bibliographers, even if limited only to first editions, must necessarily extend their description to all succeeding variants, no matter how many nor how late they may appear. Otherwise they will continue to overlook whole impressions of a work and falsely classify the sequence of others. Such misrepresentation, though readily excused in the casual studies of earlier years, should not recur in the work expected of a bibliographer today. But what there is already will remain unnoticed and uncorrected until scholars admit some responsibility for this forgotten century and set aright the many things that have gone wrong.

In appealing for the assistance of others I should acknowledge, at the last, that my own ignorance of 18th century bibliography is hardly a sufficient recommendation for all that I have discussed in this lecture. The symptoms observed here and there have perhaps again led me to exaggerate the general condition and to propose radical surgery where simple convalescence may suffice. Whether we are alarmed or complacent about this situation, the appropriate treatment, we will agree, must await further examination. A more intensive study along the lines I suggest will doubtless uncover new points, new problems, and new techniques for dealing with them. All proposals, therefore, including all of those so ardently advocated in this paper, are subject to the test of further knowledge.

To illustrate the danger of assuming too much from this or any other discourse on 18th century bibliography, let me refer, in conclusion, to three other books, each of which has been, for me, a chastening experience. Until about a month ago I had presumed, largely from the several examples cited above, that when an editor is dealing with a sequence of impressions he need collate only single copies of the first and last, since the last would preserve all corrections successively introduced in previous variants. This foolish notion, first entertained when I examined Burke's *Reflections*, has now been squashed by what I discover in his *Two Letters on the Regicide Directory of France*. Here I am dismayed to find that nine long paragraphs originally introduced in the 10th impression were then reimposed and offered to the public as an eight-page cancel for leaf X2 in the earlier print-

ings, and thus appear in about one of every nine copies of the nine previous impressions. A proper identification of this insert and its relation to the whole edition necessitates first a thorough examination of numerous copies of each and every impression through the 10th and then a determination of the order of printing, which in this instance is the *reverse* of that normally encountered.²²

Even for books undisturbed by later inserts a slight mischance may have extraordinary consequences and again demand of the bibliographer the most intensive investigation. In the first two impressions of Thomson's *Sophonisba* there is considerable variation that affects almost every copy in a different way. The extraordinary diversity has a simple cause, the cancellation of leaf A2, containing the dedication to the Queen. In the original state Thomson addressed her as follows:

And to whom can this illustrious *Carthaginian*
so properly fly for protection, as to the Queen of
a *People*, more powerful at sea than *Carthage*?
more flourishing in commerce than those *first*
Merchants? more invincible to conquest?

Now while the Queen was certainly "invincible to conquest" it was hardly appropriate to say that she was all-powerful at sea or flourished in commerce. Recognizing the ambiguity of his intended compliment, Thomson thereupon altered it to read "the Queen, who commands the hearts of a *People*," so that the attributes are now properly assigned to the body politic. Unfortunately, in

²² I here simplify a problem which also requires, if all the facts are to be disclosed, a reading of the two French translations. What they reveal must await the publication of my bibliography of Burke.

effecting this slight change, the printer had to consider that he was then running off by half-sheet imposition two different formats on three different kinds of paper, all of which prompted him to compose the cancel in four different settings. By mathematical calculation these various factors variously combined produce eighteen different states, of which I have finally located thirteen. The other five I despair of finding because my search has already encompassed every copy known to me. Thus, to point the moral of this sad tale, if complications begin to develop, it may be incumbent upon the bibliographer not only to examine as many as 35 impressions of an edition, but 35 copies of every impression. The 39 I have seen of *Sophonisba* still do not account for all the variants.

My last example, I am afraid, is even more distressing than the other two, for it poses a threat which may, at any time, undermine even the most exacting research, even that extending to 35×35 or 1225 copies. This threat resides in the counterfeit edition, the piracy always to be expected, especially of popular works. Numerous counterfeits exist in earlier times, all imitating the original and all intended to deceive; but in these the imitation is readily apparent and easily exposed, once the variants have been brought together. In the 18th century, however, the gradual standardization of types, ornaments, and paper has enabled the pirate to produce a more accurate copy. On occasion, indeed, even the press figures are reproduced, though of course they would be of significance only to the printers of the original edition. When Dr. Dawson first exposed this nefarious subterfuge in three early 18th century Shakespearian re-

prints,²³ I consoled myself with the thought that while the pirate's technique had now become very refined in this one particular it was still very crude in others. This consolation was not to last, however, for less than a month ago I found, quite by accident, a later counterfeit so faithfully reproducing the original that the greater part of it can be detected only under a comparison microscope. This is of Sheridan's *The Critic*, not the well-known piracy, but another and more sinister version. It has the same page numbers, signatures, and press figures, all in identical positions, and also, like the original, an elaborate copperplate title. As in the original it signifies its "edition" only on the half-title, a leaf missing in one of the copies I have seen, present and marked "Second Edition" in the other. Like the original it may then run through various "editions" and perhaps alter its figures as it proceeds. Thus by 1781 we come upon what may be truly called a facsimile printing, one so precisely executed that all normal means of detection fail to disclose its identity. How far this facsimile reproduction may extend I am unable to conjecture. The very prospect is chilling.

These several misadventures with Burke, Thomson, and Sheridan illustrate the difficulties that lie beyond even the most methodical analysis. What at first appears to be so "easy" (if I may again use little Guido's term), so orderly, so amenable to systematic investigation, may nevertheless represent at some point in the inquiry a baffling crux demanding the greatest skill and ingenuity for its solution. But since there has been for the most

²³ *Papers of the Bib. Soc. of the Univ. of Virginia*, I (1949), 47-58. Still another duplication of figures, in editions D and E of Sterne's *Letters from Yorick to Eliza*, has just been reported by Mr. J. C. T. Oates in *Trans. of the Cambridge Bib. Soc.*, II (1955), 161.

part no systematic approach to any of the problems in the 18th century, whether these relate to the whole period, to one author, or to a single book, questions of every kind, large and small, remain unnoticed and unanswered. Thus we go on preparing catalogues of what we think are first editions, publishing reprints of what we believe to be the authoritative text, and uttering opinions on what we suppose are the final statements of our authors, all in ignorance of evidence which, some time, may require that we do everything over again.